

Message Text

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51

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 COA-02 EB-11 COME-00 INT-08 IO-14 OMB-01

AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DLOS-07

CG-00 DOTE-00 ACDA-19 FMC-04 DRC-01 /176 W

----- 110800

R 101218Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7654

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, TH, VS, PBOR

SUBJECT : THAI/SOUTH VIETNAMESE DISPUTE OVER SOUTH VIETNAM'S
EXTENDED FISHING LIMITS

REF: A. BANGKOK 7469

B. FBIS D100424Z MAY 74

C.FBIS D090814Z MAY 74

D. FBIS D100430Z MAY 74

E. FBIS D 091505Z MAY 74

1. THAI EMOTIONS ARE RUNNING HIGH AGAINST SOUTH VIETNAM'S
50-MILE EXTENDED FISHING LIMIT (REF A), BUT THE THAI
GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO HANDLE THE ISSUE WITH MODERATION.
THE THAI FISHERIES ASSOCIATION REQUESTED THE ROYAL THAI NAVY
(RTN) TO PATROL THE DISPUTED FISHING WATERS TO PROTECT
THAI TRAWLERS FROM ATTACK BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE GUNBOATS.
ACCORDING TO THE MAY 10 " BANGKOK POST", THE RTN DISAGREED
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WITH THE ASSOCIATION. A HIGH RANKING RTN OFFICER TOLD THE

NEWSPAPER THAT THE DISPATCHING OF GUNBOATS TO ESCORT THAI TRAWLERS FISHING NEAR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PENINSULA MAY UNNECESSARILY SPARK AN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS. HE ADDID THAT THE ACTION WOULD ALSO EMBARRASS THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) WHICH IS TRYING TO SOLVE THE ISSUE BY PACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS. "THE NATION" ON MAY 10, HOWEVER, REPORTS THAT THE RTN HAS ORDERED ITS FLEET TO PREPARE CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR PROTECTING THAI FISHING BOATS IF THE GOVERNMENT GIVES THE ORDER (REF B).

2. THE PRESS EXACERBATED THE ISSUED MAY 9 BY REPORTING A THAI CREWMAN'S ACCUSATION THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE NAVY HAD COMPLETELY LOOTED A THAI TRAWLER AND ITS CREW WHICH IT CAPTURED JANUARY 5 BEYOND THE "INTERNATIONALLY - ACCEPTED" 12-MILE TERRITORIAL LIMIT. ACCORDING TO THE "BANGKOK POST" ACCOUNT, SOUTH VIETNAM RELEASED THE TRAWLER AND CREW MAY 1 AFTER THE OWNERS PAID A 500,000 BAHT FINE (REF C).

3. SEVERAL THAI-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS HAVE CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION AGAINST SOUTH VIETNAM. EVEN THE "BANGKOK POST", WHICH HAD TAKEN A MODERATE VIEW OF THE PROBLEM EARLIER (REF A), SUPPORTS IN A MAY 10 EDITORIAL THE THAI FISHERIES ASSOCIATION'S CALL FOR RTN GUNBOATS TO ACCOMPANY THE FISHING FLEET (REF D).

4. THE RTG CONTINUES TO SEEK A SOLUTIION TO THE PROBLEM THROUGH NEGOTIATION. MFA SPOKESMAN PRACHA KHUNAKASEM ANNOUNCED MAY 9 THAT THE NEWLY-APPOINTED THAI AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, SUBAN SAWETTHAMAN, LEFT FOR SAIGON THE SAME DAY WITH A SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT TO NEGOTIATE THE DISPUTED FISHING RIGHTS IN THE GULF OF SIAM (REF E). PRACHA ALSO SAID THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT YET REPLIED TO THE AIDE MEMOIRE WHICH FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA HANDED TO VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR TRAN NGOC TAM MAY 3 (REF A).

5. COMMENT: WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE RTG DOES NOT WANT TO MAKE A BIG ISSUE OUT OF THE FISHERIES DISPUTE. TALK OF SENDING RTN GUNBOATS INTO THE DISPUTED FISHING
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WATERS IS MOST LIKELY INTENDED TO SATISFY THAI FISHING INTERESTS AND DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION. NEVERTHELESS ANOTHER INCIDENT SUCH AS THE FATAL SHOOTING OF A THAI TRAWLER SKIPPER APRIL 23 WOULD PROVOKE THE THAI PUBLIC STILL FURTHER AND COULD PROMPT THE RTG TO RESPOND MORE FORCEFULLY.
MASTERS

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